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(54) **MOTOR CONTROL DEVICE AND VEHICLE-STEERING DEVICE COMPRISING SAME**

MOTORSTEUERVORRICHTUNG UND FAHRZEUGLENKVORRICHTUNG DAMIT

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Description

TECHNICAL FIELD

5 **[0001]** The present invention relates to a motor controller for driving a brushless motor, and to a vehicle steering apparatus including the motor controller. One example of the vehicle steering apparatus is an electric power steering apparatus.

BACKGROUND ART

10 **[0002]** Document US 2006/0125439 A1 discloses a motor controller as set out in the preamble of claim 1. In particular, a synchronous motor drive unit is described, which comprises a rotary sensor. An angle converter of a position sensing section receives analog output signals of the rotary sensor and determines a sensor-sensed angle. An absolute angle converter determines an absolute angle based thereon, and a position corrector corrects the absolute angle based on a phase difference provided by a phase difference estimator.

15 **[0003]** Document US 7 076 340 B1 discloses a method of controlling speed of synchronous motor, and a method of identifying constant of synchronous motor, wherein a sensorless vector control is performed through use of a rotation speed of a synchronous motor and the position of a rotor.

20 **[0004]** Document US 2002/180402 A2 discloses a drive control apparatus and method that drive an AC motor by applying a rectangular wave voltage thereto. The apparatus estimates the torque of a rotor of the AC motor, and detects a torque deviation, which is the difference between the estimated torque and a required torque of the motor. A controller controls a state of the rectangular wave voltage applied to the AC motor through torque feedback control based on the torque deviation, so that the torque approaches the torque command value.

25 **[0005]** A motor controller for controlling the driving of a brushless motor is generally constructed so as to control the supply of a motor electric current according to an output of a rotation angle sensor which detects the rotation angle of a rotor. A resolver which outputs a sine-wave signal and a cosine-wave signal for the rotor rotation angle (electrical angle) is typically used as the rotation angle sensor. However, the resolver is expensive, and requires a greater number of wirings and a greater installation space. This disadvantageously prevents the cost reduction and the size reduction of an apparatus including the brushless motor.

30 **[0006]** To cope with this, a sensorless driving system is proposed, which is adapted to drive the brushless motor without using the rotation angle sensor. In the sensorless driving system, the phase of a magnetic pole (the electrical angle of the rotor) is estimated by estimating an inductive voltage occurring due to the rotation of the rotor. When the rotor is stopped or rotated at a very low speed, it is impossible to estimate the inductive voltage, so that the phase of the magnetic pole is estimated by other method. More specifically, a sensing signal is inputted to a stator, and a response of the motor to the sensing signal is detected. The rotational position of the rotor is estimated based on the motor response.

CITATION LIST

PATENT LITERATURE

40 **[0007]** Patent Literature 1: JP-A-2007-267549

SUMMARY OF INVENTION

TECHNICAL PROBLEM

45 **[0008]** The sensorless driving system described above estimates the rotational position of the rotor by using the inductive voltage and the sensing signal, and controls the motor based on the estimated rotational position. However, this driving system is not properly adapted for any specific applications. For example, no sensorless driving technique is established yet for controlling a brushless motor used as a driving source of an electric power steering system which applies a steering assist force to a steering mechanism of a motor vehicle. Accordingly, there is a demand for other type of sensorless control system.

50 **[0009]** It is an object of the present invention to provide a motor controller capable of controlling a motor by a novel control system employing no rotation angle sensor, and to provide a vehicle steering apparatus employing such a motor controller.

55

SOLUTION TO PROBLEM

[0010] This object is solved by a motor controller as defined in claim 1.

[0011] With this arrangement, the motor is driven with the axis electric current value (hereinafter referred to as "virtual axis electric current value") defined in the rotating coordinate system defined with respect to the control angle ($\gamma\delta$ coordinate system, hereinafter referred to as "virtual rotating coordinate system" which has coordinate axes called "virtual axes"), while the control angle is updated by the addition of the addition angle in each computing cycle. The addition angle has a value computed according to the torque to be generated by the motor or the response of the motor to the axis electric current value. This makes it possible to generate a required torque by driving the motor with the virtual axis electric current value while updating the control angle, i.e., while updating the coordinate axes (virtual axes) of the virtual rotating coordinate system. Thus, the motor can properly generate the torque without the use of the rotation angle sensor.

[0012] The motor controller preferably further includes a limiting unit (24) which limits the addition angle. With this arrangement, the addition angle is properly limited, whereby an excessively great addition angle for the actual rotation of the rotor is substantially prevented from being added to the control angle. More specifically, the addition angle is limited so as to be set within a proper angular range for the rotation speed range of the rotor. Thus, the motor can be properly controlled.

[0013] The limiting unit may be adapted, for example, to limit the absolute value of the addition angle to not greater than a limit value given by the following expression :

$$\text{Limit value} = \text{Maximum rotor angular speed} \times \text{Computing cycle}$$

wherein "maximum rotor angular speed" is the maximum value of the rotor angular speed based on the electrical angle.

[0014] Where the rotation of the motor is transmitted to a steering shaft of a vehicle steering apparatus via a speed reduction mechanism having a predetermined speed reduction ratio, for example, the maximum rotor angular speed is given by an expression of Maximum steering angular speed (Maximum rotational angular speed of steering shaft) $\times$ Speed reduction ratio $\times$ Number of polar pairs. The number of polar pairs means the number of pairs of poles (N/S poles) of the rotor.

[0015] According to another aspect of the present invention, there is provided a vehicle steering apparatus, which includes: a motor (3) which applies a driving force to a steering mechanism (2) of a motor vehicle; a torque detecting unit (1) which detects a steering torque applied to an operation member operated for steering the motor vehicle; and the aforesaid motor controller (5) for controlling the motor, wherein the addition angle computing unit (22, 23, 40) computes the addition angle according to the steering torque detected by the torque detecting unit.

[0016] The torque to be generated by the motor as the driving source of the vehicle steering apparatus corresponds to the steering torque, so that the driving force can be applied to the steering mechanism according to a driver's intention for the steering. According to this inventive aspect, the addition angle is computed according to the steering torque. Since the control angle is updated according to the steering torque, the shift amount (load angle) of the virtual axis from the coordinate axis of the rotating coordinate system (dq coordinate system) extending through the magnetic poles of the rotor corresponds to the steering torque. As a result, the torque is properly generated by the motor according to the steering torque, so that the driving force can be applied to the steering mechanism according to the driver's steering operation.

[0017] Where the operation member and the steering mechanism are mechanically coupled to each other in the vehicle steering apparatus, the response of the motor to the virtual axis electric current value (the torque generated by the motor) appears as a change in steering torque. In the vehicle steering apparatus having such a construction, therefore, the computation of the addition angle according to the steering torque is equivalent to the computation of the addition angle according to the response of the motor to the virtual axis electric current value.

[0018] The vehicle steering apparatus may further include a command steering torque setting unit (21) which sets a command steering torque. The addition angle computing unit (22, 23) is preferably adapted to compute the addition angle according to a deviation of the steering torque detected by the torque detecting unit from the command steering torque set by the command steering torque setting unit.

[0019] With this arrangement, the command steering torque is set, and the addition angle is computed according to the deviation of the steering torque (detected value) from the command steering torque. The addition angle is determined so that the steering torque is equal to the command steering torque, and the control angle is set according to the addition angle. With the command steering torque thus properly set, therefore, the motor properly generates the driving force, which is in turn applied to the steering mechanism.

[0020] If the command steering torque is set at zero in an electric power steering apparatus, for example, the motor

is controlled so that the steering torque becomes zero. Thus, the driver can perform the steering operation without feeling a steering resistance. Such a control operation is an example of a sensorless control which is, for example, continuously performed when a rotation angle sensor malfunctions, or performed in an emergency when a normal control operation cannot be performed due to malfunctions of sensors and other devices. Where it is desirable to provide the steering resistance to some extent, the command steering torque is set to a nonzero value. Thus, the driver can perform the steering operation while feeling the steering resistance.

[0021] The vehicle steering apparatus may further include a steering angle detecting unit (4) which detects the steering angle of the operation member. The command steering torque setting unit is preferably adapted to set the command steering torque according to the steering angle detected by the steering angle detecting unit.

[0022] With this arrangement, the command steering torque is set according to the steering angle of the operation member, so that the motor can properly generate the torque according to the steering angle. Thus, the driver can obtain a proper steering feeling.

[0023] The command steering torque setting unit may be adapted to set the command steering torque according to the vehicle speed of the motor vehicle detected by a vehicle speed detecting unit (6) which detects the vehicle speed of the motor vehicle.

[0024] With this arrangement, the command steering torque is set according to the vehicle speed, so that a vehicle speed-responsive control operation can be performed. An excellent steering feeling can be provided by setting the command steering torque at a lower level for a higher vehicle speed.

[0025] The vehicle steering apparatus may further include an abnormality judging unit (30) which determines the occurrence of an abnormality when the absolute value of a deviation of the steering torque detected by the torque detecting unit from the command steering torque set by the command steering torque setting unit is not less than a predetermined deviation threshold, or when the absolute value of the steering torque detected by the torque detecting unit is not less than a predetermined torque threshold.

[0026] With this arrangement, the judgment on the abnormality is based on the deviation of the steering torque from the command steering torque, or based on the steering torque. Thus, the vehicle steering apparatus can have a self-diagnosis function.

[0027] It is preferred that, when the occurrence of the abnormality is determined, the electric current to be supplied to the motor is controlled to be zero so as to substantially prevent the motor from becoming a load (resistance) to the steering mechanism. This makes it possible to drive the steering mechanism by operating the operation member (to perform a so-called manual steering operation).

[0028] The electric current driving unit (45) may be adapted to generate an axis electric current value including an angle estimation electric current value. The addition angle computing unit preferably further includes a load angle computing unit (49) which computes a load angle as the addition angle based on a response of the motor to the angle estimation electric current value, the load angle being a difference between the control angle and a rotation angle of the rotor.

[0029] With this arrangement, the angle estimation electric current value is supplied to the virtual axis, and the response of the motor to the supply of the angle estimation electric current value is detected. The torque generated by the motor corresponds to the load angle which is a difference (angular difference) between the virtual axis and the dq coordinate axis. Therefore, the load angle can be estimated from a relationship between the angle estimation electric current value and the motor response (particularly, an electric current component contributory to the torque or the generation of the torque). The actual rotation angle of the rotor can be estimated by adding the load angle as the addition angle to the control angle. This makes it possible to control the motor without the need for the rotation angle sensor.

[0030] In the vehicle steering apparatus (e.g., electric power steering apparatus) in which the operation member and the steering mechanism are mechanically coupled to each other, a change in motor torque with respect to the angle estimation electric current value appears as a change in steering torque. In the vehicle steering apparatus having such a construction, therefore, the load angle can be computed according to the change in steering torque with respect to the angle estimation electric current value.

[0031] The foregoing and other objects, features and effects of the present invention will become more apparent from the following description of embodiments with reference to the attached drawings.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF DRAWINGS

[0032]

Fig. 1 is a block diagram for explaining the electrical configuration of an electric power steering apparatus employing a motor controller according to one embodiment of the present invention.

Fig. 2 is a schematic diagram for explaining the structure of a motor.

Fig. 3 is a control block diagram of the electric power steering apparatus.

Fig. 4 is a diagram showing an exemplary characteristic of a command steering torque with respect a steering angle.

Fig. 5 is a diagram showing an exemplary setting of a γ -axis command electric current value.

Fig. 6 is an explanatory diagram for explaining the functions of an addition/subtraction judging section and an addition/subtraction factor multiplying section.

Fig. 7 is a flow chart for explaining a process to be performed by the addition/subtraction judging section.

Fig. 8 is a diagram for explaining a control angle computing cycle.

Fig. 9 is a flow chart for explaining the function of a limiter.

Fig. 10 is a flow chart for explaining a process to be performed by an abnormality judging section.

Fig. 11 is a block diagram for explaining the construction of an electric power steering apparatus according to another embodiment of the present invention.

Fig. 12 is a block diagram for explaining the construction of a motor controller according to further another embodiment of the present invention.

Fig. 13 is a diagram showing an exemplary setting of a δ -axis command electric current value in the embodiment of Fig. 12.

DESCRIPTION OF EMBODIMENTS

[0033] Fig. 1 is a block diagram for explaining the electrical configuration of an electric power steering apparatus (exemplary vehicle steering apparatus) employing a motor controller according to one embodiment of the present invention. The electric power steering apparatus includes a torque sensor 1 which detects a steering torque T applied to a steering wheel 10 (operation member) operable for steering the motor vehicle, a motor 3 (brushless motor) which applies a steering assist force to a steering mechanism 2 of a motor vehicle via a speed reduction mechanism 7, a steering angle sensor 4 which detects a steering angle that is a rotation angle of the steering wheel 10, a motor controller 5 which controls the driving of the motor 3, and a vehicle speed sensor 6 which detects the speed of the motor vehicle mounted with the electric power steering apparatus.

[0034] The motor controller 5 drives the motor 3 according to the steering torque detected by the torque sensor 1, the steering angle detected by the steering angle sensor 4 and the vehicle speed detected by the vehicle speed sensor 6, thereby properly performing a steering assist operation according to the steering state and the vehicle speed.

[0035] In this embodiment, the motor 3 is a three-phase brushless motor. As schematically illustrated in Fig. 2, the motor 3 includes a rotor 50 that serves as a field magnet, and U-phase, V-phase and W-phase stator coils 51, 52, 53 provided on a stator 55 opposed to the rotor 50. The motor 3 may be of an inner rotor type in which a stator is disposed on an outer side of a rotor in opposed relation to the rotor, or of an outer rotor type in which a stator is disposed on an inner side of a tubular rotor in opposed relation to the rotor.

[0036] A three-phase stationary coordinate system (UVW coordinate system) is defined, which includes a U-axis, a V-axis and a W-axis respectively extending along the U-phase, V-phase and W-phase stator coils 51, 52, 53. Further, a two-phase rotating coordinate system (dq coordinate system or actual rotating coordinate system) is defined, which includes a d-axis (magnetic pole axis) extending through magnetic poles of the rotor 50 and a q-axis (torque axis) extending perpendicularly to the d-axis within the rotational plane of the rotor 50. The dq coordinate system is a rotating coordinate system which rotates together with the rotor 50. In the dq coordinate system, only a q-axis electric current serves for torque generation by the rotor 50. Therefore, the q-axis electric current is controlled according to a desired torque with a d-axis electric current kept at zero. The rotation angle (rotor angle) θ_M of the rotor 50 is a rotation angle of the d-axis with respect to the U-axis. The dq coordinate system is an actual rotating coordinate system defined with respect to the rotor angle θ_M . Coordinate conversion between the UVW coordinate system and the dq coordinate system can be performed with the use of the rotor angle θ_M .

[0037] Further, this embodiment employs a control angle θ_C indicating a control rotor rotation angle. The control angle θ_C is a virtual rotation angle with respect to the U-axis. A virtual two-phase rotating coordinate system ($\gamma\delta$ coordinate system or virtual rotating coordinate system) is defined, which includes a γ -axis serving as a virtual axis defined with respect to the control angle θ_C and a δ -axis advanced 90 degrees with respect to the γ -axis. Where the control angle θ_C is equal to the rotor angle θ_M , the $\gamma\delta$ coordinate system (virtual rotating coordinate system) coincides with the dq coordinate system (actual rotating coordinate system). That is, the virtual γ -axis coincides with the actual d-axis, and the virtual δ -axis coincides with the actual q-axis. The $\gamma\delta$ coordinate system is a virtual rotating coordinate system defined with respect to the control angle θ_C . Coordinate conversion between the UVW coordinate system and the $\gamma\delta$ coordinate system is performed with the use of the control angle θ_C .

[0038] A difference between the control angle θ_C and the rotor angle θ_M is defined as a load angle $\theta_L (= \theta_C - \theta_M)$.

[0039] When a γ -axis electric current I_γ is supplied to the motor 3 based on the control angle θ_C , a q-axis component of the γ -axis electric current I_γ (orthogonal projection to the q-axis) serves as a q-axis electric current I_q contributory to the torque generation by the rotor 50. That is, a relationship represented by the following expression (1) is established between the γ -axis electric current I_γ and the q-axis electric current I_q :

$$I_q = I_y \cdot \sin \theta_L \dots (1)$$

[0040] Referring again to Fig. 1, the motor controller 5 includes a microcomputer 11, a driving circuit (inverter circuit) 12 controlled by the microcomputer 11 for supplying an electric power to the motor 3, and an electric current detecting section 13 which detects electric currents flowing through the stator coils of the respective phases of the motor 3.

[0041] The electric current detecting section 13 detects phase electric currents I_U , I_V , I_W (hereinafter referred to as "three-phase detection electric currents I_{UVW} " when being collectively designated) flowing through the respective phase stator coils 51, 52, 53 of the motor 3. These are electric currents flowing along the respective coordinate axes of the UVW coordinate system.

[0042] The microcomputer 11 includes a CPU and memories (a ROM, a RAM and the like), and executes predetermined programs to function as a plurality of functional sections. The functional sections include a command steering torque setting section 21, a torque deviation computing section 22, a PI (proportional integration controlling section 23, a limiter 24, an addition/subtraction factor multiplying section 25, a control angle computing section 26, an addition/subtraction judging section 27, an abnormality judging section 30, a command electric current value generating section 31, an electric current deviation computing section 32, a PI controlling section 33, a $\gamma\delta/UVW$ converting section 34, a PWM (Pulse Width Modulation) controlling section 35, and a UVW/ $\gamma\delta$ converting section 36.

[0043] The command steering torque setting section 21 sets a command steering torque T^* based on the steering angle detected by the steering sensor 4 and the vehicle speed detected by the vehicle speed sensor 6. As shown in Fig. 4, where the steering angle has a positive value (with the steering wheel turned right), the command steering torque T^* is set at a positive value (indicating a rightward torque). Where the steering angle has a negative value (with the steering wheel turned left), the command steering torque T^* is set at a negative value (indicating a leftward torque). The command steering torque T^* is set as having an absolute value that is increased as the absolute value of the steering angle increases (an absolute value that is increased nonlinearly in Fig. 4). However, the command steering torque T^* is set within a range between a predetermined upper limit (a positive value such as +6 Nm) and a predetermined lower limit (a negative value such as -6 Nm). The command steering torque T^* is set as having an absolute value that is reduced as the vehicle speed increases. That is, a vehicle speed responsive control operation is performed.

[0044] The torque deviation computing section 22 computes a deviation (torque deviation) ΔT of the steering torque T detected by the torque sensor 1 (hereinafter referred to as "detection steering torque T " for distinction) from the command steering torque T^* set by the command steering torque setting section 21. The PI controlling section 23 performs a PI computation on the torque deviation ΔT . That is, the torque deviation computing section 22 and the PI controlling section 23 collectively define a torque feedback controlling unit for approximating the detection steering torque T to the command steering torque T^* . The PI controlling section 23 performs the PI computation on the torque deviation ΔT to compute an addition angle α to be added to the control angle θ_C .

[0045] The limiter 24 is a limiting unit which limits the addition angle α computed by the PI controlling section 23. More specifically, the limiter 24 limits the addition angle α to a value between a predetermined upper limit UL (positive value) and a predetermined lower limit LL (negative value).

[0046] The addition/subtraction factor multiplying section 25 multiplies the addition angle α by an addition factor +1 or a subtraction factor -1. The addition angle α multiplied by the addition factor or the subtraction factor is added to a previous value $\theta_C(n-1)$ of the control angle θ_C (n is a current computing cycle number) by an adder 26A of the control angle computing section 26 (Z^{-1} is a previous value of the signal). When the addition angle α is multiplied by the addition factor +1, the current value of the control angle θ_C is $\theta_C(n) = \theta_C(n-1) + \alpha$. On the other hand, when the addition angle α is multiplied by the subtraction factor -1, the current value of the control angle θ_C is $\theta_C(n) = \theta_C(n-1) - \alpha$. The initial value of the control angle θ_C is a predetermined value (e.g., zero).

[0047] The control angle computing section 26 includes the adder 26A which adds the addition angle α applied from the addition/subtraction factor multiplying section 25 to the previous value $\theta_C(n-1)$ of the control angle θ_C . That is, the control angle computing section 26 computes the control angle θ_C in each predetermined computing cycle. The current value $\theta_C(n)$ of the control angle θ_C is determined in the current computing cycle based on the previous value $\theta_C(n-1)$ of the control angle θ_C determined in the preceding computing cycle.

[0048] The addition/subtraction judging section 27 judges whether the addition factor +1 or the subtraction factor -1 is to be employed as the factor for the multiplication of the addition angle α in the addition/subtraction factor multiplying section 25. More specifically, the addition/subtraction judging section 27 judges, based on the torque deviation ΔT computed by the torque deviation computing section 22 and a time-differential value T' of the detection steering torque T (steering torque differential value), whether the factor currently used in the addition/subtraction factor multiplying section 25 is to be maintained or to be sign-inverted between the addition factor +1 and the subtraction factor -1. Then, the addition/subtraction judging section 27 selects one of the addition factor +1 and the subtraction factor -1 based on the result of the judgment, and sets the selected factor in the addition/subtraction multiplying section 25. A process to

be performed by the addition/subtraction judging section 27 will be described later in detail.

[0049] The abnormality judging section 30 performs an abnormality judgment process based on the torque deviation ΔT computed by the torque deviation computing section 22 and the detection steering torque T detected by the torque sensor 1. The result of the abnormality judgment process is applied to the command electric current value generating section 31. If the abnormality judging section 30 determines that the abnormality occurs, the command electric current value generating section 31 sets the command electric current value at a predetermined constant value (e.g., zero).

[0050] The command electric current value generating section 31 generates command electric current values of electric currents to be respectively supplied to the coordinate axes (virtual axes) of the $\gamma\delta$ coordinate system which is the virtual rotating coordinate system defined with respect to the control angle θ_C (control rotation angle). More specifically, the command electric current value generating section 31 generates a γ -axis command electric current value I_γ^* and a δ -axis command electric current value I_δ^* (hereinafter referred to as "two-phase command electric current values $I_{\gamma\delta}^*$ " when being collectively designated). The command electric current value generating section 31 sets the γ -axis command electric current value I_γ^* at a significant value, and sets the δ -axis command electric current value I_δ^* at zero. More specifically, the command electric current value generating section 31 sets the γ -axis command electric current value I_γ^* based on the detection steering torque T detected by the torque sensor 1.

[0051] An exemplary setting of the γ -axis command electric current value I_γ^* for the detection steering torque T is shown in Fig. 5. A dead zone NR is defined around a detection steering torque T of zero. The γ -axis command electric current value I_γ^* is steeply increased outside the dead zone NR, and kept at a substantially constant value that is not less than a predetermined torque value. Thus, power supply to the motor 3 is stopped to suppress unnecessary power consumption when the driver does not operate the steering wheel 10.

[0052] The electric current deviation computing section 32 computes a deviation $I_\gamma^* - I_\gamma$ of the γ -axis detection electric current I_γ from the γ -axis command electric current value I_γ^* generated by the command electric current value generating section 31, and a deviation $I_\delta^* - I_\delta$ of the δ -axis detection electric current I_δ from the δ -axis command electric current value I_δ^* ($=0$). The γ -axis detection electric current I_γ and the δ -axis detection electric current I_δ are applied to the deviation computing section 32 from the UVW/ $\gamma\delta$ converting section 36.

[0053] The UVW/ $\gamma\delta$ converting section 36 converts the three-phase detection electric currents I_{UVW} (including the U-phase detection electric current I_U , the V-phase detection electric current I_V and the W-phase detection electric current I_W) detected by the electric current detecting section 13 in the UVW coordinate system into two-phase detection electric currents I_γ , I_δ (hereinafter referred to as "two-phase detection electric currents $I_{\gamma\delta}$ " when being collectively designated) in the $\gamma\delta$ coordinate system. The two-phase detection electric currents I_γ , I_δ are applied to the electric current deviation computing section 32. The coordinate conversion performed in the UVW/ $\gamma\delta$ converting section 36 is based on the control angle θ_C computed by the control angle computing section 26.

[0054] The PI controlling section 33 generates two-phase command voltages $V_{\gamma\delta}$ (including a γ -axis command voltage V_γ and a δ -axis command voltage V_δ) to be applied to the motor 3 by performing a PI computation on the electric current deviation computed by the electric current deviation computing section 32. The two-phase command voltages $V_{\gamma\delta}$ are applied to the $\gamma\delta$ /UVW converting section 34.

[0055] The $\gamma\delta$ /UVW converting section 34 generates three-phase command voltages V_{UVW} by performing a coordinate converting computation on the two-phase command voltages $V_{\gamma\delta}$. The three-phase command voltages V_{UVW} include a U-phase command voltage V_U , a V-phase command voltage V_V and a W-phase command voltage V_W . The three-phase command voltages V_{UVW} are applied to the PWM controlling section 35.

[0056] The PWM controlling section 35 generates a U-phase PWM control signal, a V-phase PWM control signal and a W-phase PWM control signal at duty ratios for the U-phase command voltage V_U , the V-phase command voltage V_V and the W-phase command voltage V_W , and supplies these PWM control signals to the driving circuit 12.

[0057] The driving circuit 12 includes three-phase inverter circuits for the U-phase, the V-phase and the W-phase. Power devices of the respective inverter circuits are controlled by the PWM control signals applied from the PWM control section 35, whereby voltages corresponding to the three-phase command voltages V_{UVW} are applied to the respective phase stator coils 51, 52, 53 of the motor 3.

[0058] The electric current deviation computing section 32 and the PI controlling section 33 collectively define an electric current feedback controlling unit. By the function of the electric current feedback controlling unit, the motor electric currents flowing in the motor 3 are controlled to be approximated to the two-phase command electric current values $I_{\gamma\delta}^*$ set by the command electric current value generating section 31.

[0059] Fig. 3 is a control block diagram of the electric power steering apparatus. For simplification of explanation, the functions of the limiter 24 and the addition/subtraction factor multiplying section 25 are not shown.

[0060] The addition angle α is generated by performing the PI control (K_P is a proportionality factor, K_I is an integration factor, and $1/s$ is an integration operator) on the deviation (torque deviation) of the detection steering torque T from the command steering torque T^* . The current value $\theta_C(n) = \theta_C(n-1) + \alpha$ of the control angle θ_C is computed by adding the addition angle α to the previous value $\theta_C(n-1)$ of the control angle θ_C . At this time, a difference between the actual rotor angle θ_M of the rotor 50 and the control angle θ_C is employed as the load angle $\theta_L = \theta_C - \theta_M$.

[0061] Therefore, when the γ -axis electric current I_γ is supplied to the γ -axis (virtual axis) of the $\gamma\delta$ coordinate system (virtual rotating coordinate system) defined with respect to the control angle θ_C according to the γ -axis command electric current value I_γ^* , the q-axis electric current I_q becomes $I_q = I_\gamma \sin\theta_L$. The q-axis electric current I_q is contributory to the torque generation by the rotor 50. That is, an assist torque $T_A (=K_T \cdot I_\gamma \sin\theta_L)$, which is determined by multiplying the q-axis electric current $I_q (=I_\gamma \sin\theta_L)$ by a torque constant K_T of the motor 3, is transmitted to the steering mechanism 2 via the speed reduction mechanism 7. A value calculated by subtracting the assist torque T_A from the load torque T_L applied from the steering mechanism 2 is the steering torque T to be applied to the steering wheel 10 by the driver. The feedback of the steering torque T makes it possible to approximate the steering torque T to the command steering torque T^* . That is, the addition angle α is computed so that the detection steering torque T is equal to the command steering torque T^* , and the control angle θ_C is controlled based on the addition angle α .

[0062] The load angle θ_L is changed by thus updating the control angle θ_C with the use of the addition angle α determined based on the deviation ΔT of the detection steering torque T from the command steering torque T^* while causing the electric current to flow along the γ -axis (virtual axis for the control). Then, the motor 3 generates the torque according to the load angle θ_L . Since the motor 3 can generate the torque according to the command steering torque T^* determined based on the steering angle and the vehicle speed, the steering assist force can be properly applied to the steering mechanism 2 according to the steering angle and the vehicle speed. That is, the steering assist controlling operation is performed so that the steering torque is increased as the absolute value of the steering angle increases, and the steering torque is reduced as the vehicle speed increases.

[0063] Thus, the electric power steering apparatus can properly perform the steering assist operation by properly controlling the motor 3 without the use of the rotation angle sensor. This simplifies the construction, and reduces the costs.

[0064] Fig. 6 is an explanatory diagram for explaining the functions of the addition/subtraction judging section 27 and the addition/subtraction factor multiplying section 25, illustrating a relationship between the load angle θ_L and the q-axis electric current I_q . The q-axis electric current I_q is given by $I_q = I_\gamma \sin\theta_L$ ($\theta_L = \theta_C - \theta_M$) with the use of the load angle θ_L . Therefore, the change in the q-axis electric current I_q with respect to the load angle θ_L is such that the q-axis electric current I_q monotonically increases in ranges of $0 \text{ degree} \leq \theta_L < 90 \text{ degrees}$ and $270 \text{ degrees} \leq \theta_L < 360 \text{ degrees}$ and monotonically decreases in a range of $90 \text{ degrees} \leq \theta_L < 270 \text{ degrees}$.

[0065] On the other hand, the PI controlling section 23 is operative to generate a positive addition angle α if the deviation ΔT of the detection steering torque T from the command steering torque T^* has a positive value, and generates a negative addition angle α if the deviation ΔT has a negative value.

[0066] It is herein assumed, for example, that a target load angle θ_L^* for the command steering torque T^* (a load angle that provides a target q-axis electric current for the command steering torque T^*) is slightly greater than 90 degrees and the current load angle θ_{L1} is slightly greater than 180 degrees, so that both the target load angle θ_L^* and the current load angle θ_{L1} fall within the monotonously decreasing range ($90 \text{ degrees} \leq \theta_L < 270 \text{ degrees}$) as shown in Fig. 6. In this case, the current load angle θ_L can be more rapidly approximated to the target load angle θ_L^* by reducing the load angle θ_L rather than increasing the load angle θ_L . That is, the time required for reaching the target q-axis electric current is reduced by employing a positive addition angle α rather than a negative addition angle α .

[0067] Therefore, the addition/subtraction judging section 27 determines an addition/subtraction factor to determine the sign of the addition angle α to ensure that the target load angle θ_L^* is more rapidly reached. Then, the addition/subtraction factor is applied to the addition/subtraction multiplying section 25.

[0068] More specifically, as shown in Fig. 7, the addition/subtraction judging section 27 acquires the deviation (torque deviation) ΔT of the detection steering torque T from the command steering torque T^* from the torque deviation computing section 22 (Step S1). Further, the addition/subtraction judging section 27 determines the steering torque differential value T' which is the time-differential value of the detection steering torque T (Step S2). Then, the addition/subtraction judging section 27 multiplies the torque deviation ΔT by the steering torque differential value T' , and checks the sign of the resulting product (Step S3). If the product $\Delta T \cdot T'$ is positive or zero (YES in Step S3), the addition/subtraction factor currently used is maintained (Step S4). On the other hand, if the product $\Delta T \cdot T'$ is negative (NO in Step S3), the addition/subtraction factor is sign-inverted (Step S5). That is, an addition/subtraction factor having a sign different from that of the current addition/subtraction factor is set in the addition/subtraction factor multiplying section 25. The initial value of the addition/subtraction factor may be, for example, a positive value +1.

[0069] If the detection steering torque T tends to increase (i.e., the steering torque differential value T' is positive) when the torque deviation ΔT is positive, the detection steering torque T can be approximated to the command steering torque T^* . Therefore, if the product $\Delta T \cdot T'$ is positive, the detection steering torque T can be rapidly approximated to the command steering torque T^* by maintaining the addition/subtraction factor currently set in the addition/subtraction factor multiplying section 25.

[0070] On the other hand, if the torque deviation ΔT is positive and the detection steering torque T tends to decrease (i.e., the steering torque differential value T' is negative), the product $\Delta T \cdot T'$ is negative. At this time, the detection steering torque T changes apart from the command steering torque T^* . Therefore, the detection steering torque T can be rapidly approximated to the command steering torque T^* by sign-inverting the addition/subtraction factor currently set in the

addition/subtraction factor multiplying section 25.

[0071] If the detection steering torque T tends to decrease (i.e., the steering torque differential value T' is negative) when the torque deviation ΔT is negative, the detection steering torque T can be approximated to the command steering torque T^* . Therefore, if the product $\Delta T \cdot T'$ is positive, the detection steering torque T can be rapidly approximated to the command steering torque T^* by maintaining the addition/subtraction factor currently set in the addition/subtraction factor multiplying section 25.

[0072] On the other hand, if the torque deviation ΔT is negative and the detection steering torque T tends to increase (i.e., the steering torque differential value T' is positive), the product $\Delta T \cdot T'$ is negative. At this time, the detection steering torque T changes apart from the command steering torque T^* . Therefore, the detection steering torque T can be rapidly approximated to the command steering torque T^* by sign-inverting the addition/subtraction factor currently set in the addition/subtraction factor multiplying section 25.

[0073] Thus, the addition/subtraction factor currently used is maintained if the product $\Delta T \cdot T'$ is positive, and sign-inverted if the product $\Delta T \cdot T'$ is negative, whereby the detection steering torque T can be more rapidly approximated to the command steering torque T^* .

[0074] Fig. 8 is a diagram for explaining the computing cycle for computing the control angle θ_C , illustrating a relationship between the load angle θ_L and the q-axis electric current I_q . In order to reduce the computational load of the microcomputer 11 as much as possible, it is preferred to increase the computing cycle as much as possible. In this embodiment, therefore, the computing cycle is determined based on a maximum steering angular speed. The maximum steering angular speed is the possible highest level of the steering angular speed of the steering wheel 10, for example, about 800 deg/sec.

[0075] With the maximum steering angular speed, the change rate of the electric angle of the rotor 50 (electric angular speed or maximum rotor angular speed) is given by the following expression (2) as a product of the maximum steering angular speed, the reduction ratio of the speed reduction mechanism 7 and the number of polar pairs of the rotor 50. The number of polar pairs means the number of pairs of poles (N/S poles) of the rotor 50.

$$\begin{aligned} \text{Maximum rotor angular speed} &= \text{Maximum steering} \\ &\text{angular speed} \times \text{Reduction ratio} \times \text{Number of polar} \\ &\text{pairs} \dots (2) \end{aligned}$$

[0076] The maximum electric angle change amount of the rotor 50 (maximum rotor angle change amount) during the computation of the control angle θ_C (in the computing cycle) is a value calculated from the following expression (3) by multiplying the maximum rotor angular speed by the computing cycle:

$$\begin{aligned} &\text{Maximum rotor angle change amount} \\ &= \text{Maximum rotor angular speed} \times \text{Control cycle} \\ &= \text{Maximum steering angular speed} \times \text{Reduction ratio} \times \\ &\text{Number of polar pairs} \times \text{Control cycle} \dots (3) \end{aligned}$$

[0077] On the other hand, the full range ($0 \text{ degree} \leq \theta_L < 360 \text{ degrees}$) of the load angle $\theta_L (= \theta_C - \theta_M)$ is divided into a monotonically decreasing range A in which the q-axis electric current I_q monotonically decreases and a monotonically increasing range B in which the q-axis electric current I_q monotonically increases. The monotonically decreasing range A is defined as a range of $90 \text{ degrees} \leq \theta_L < 270 \text{ degrees}$. The monotonically increasing range B is defined as ranges of $0 \text{ degree} \leq \theta_L < 90 \text{ degrees}$ and $270 \text{ degrees} \leq \theta_L < 360 \text{ degrees}$. For proper feedback, the control operation should be continuously performed in the same range at least twice. For the control operation, the maximum rotor angle change amount is not greater than 90 degrees as indicated by the following expression (4):

$$\begin{aligned} \text{Maximum rotor angle change amount} &\leq 90 \\ &\text{degrees} \dots (4) \end{aligned}$$

[0078] The above expression (3) is substituted in the expression (4), and the resulting expression is transformed to provide the following expression (5):

$$\begin{aligned} \text{Computing cycle} &\leq \frac{90 \text{ degrees}}{\text{Maximum rotor angular speed}} \\ &= \frac{90 \text{ degrees}}{\text{Maximum steering angular speed} \times \text{Reduction ratio} \times \text{Number of polar pairs}} \end{aligned} \quad \dots (5)$$

[0079] Therefore, the computing cycle is determined so as to be equal to the value of the right term of the expression (5), thereby making it possible to properly control the motor 3 while increasing the computing cycle as much as possible to reduce the computational load of the microcomputer 11.

[0080] Fig. 9 is a flow chart for explaining the function of the limiter 24. The maximum electric angle change amount of the rotor 50 (maximum rotor angle change amount) during the computation of the control angle θ_C (in the computing cycle), which is given by the above expression (3), is the maximum change amount of the control angle θ_C allowable in each computing cycle. Therefore, where the maximum rotor angle change amount is expressed as $\omega_{\max}$ (>0), an upper limit UL and a lower limit LL of the addition angle α are given by the following expressions (6) and (7):

$$UL = +\omega_{\max} \quad \dots (6)$$

$$LL = -\omega_{\max} \quad \dots (7)$$

[0081] The limiter 24 compares the addition angle α computed by the PI controlling section 23 with the upper limit UL (Step S11). If the addition angle α is greater than the upper limit UL (YES in Step S11), the upper limit UL is assigned to the addition angle α (Step S12). Therefore, the upper limit UL ($=+\omega_{\max}$) is added to the control angle θ_C .

[0082] If the addition angle α computed by the PI controlling section 23 is not greater than the upper limit UL (NO in Step S11), the limiter 24 further compares the addition angle α with the lower limit LL (Step S13). If the addition angle α is less than the lower limit (YES in Step S13), the lower limit LL is assigned to the addition angle α (Step S14). Therefore, the lower limit LL ($=-\omega_{\max}$) is added to the control angle θ_C .

[0083] If the addition angle α computed by the PI controlling section 23 is not less than the lower limit LL and not greater than the upper limit UL (NO in Step S13), the addition angle α is used as it is for the addition to the control angle θ_C .

[0084] Thus, the addition angle α is limited between the upper limit UL and the lower limit LL, thereby stabilizing the control. More specifically, even if the control state is unstable (the assist force is unstable) due to shortage of the electric current or at the start of the control, the control state can be rapidly stabilized. This improves the steering feeling.

[0085] Fig. 10 is a flow chart for explaining a process to be performed by the abnormality judging section 30. First, the torque deviation ΔT ($=T^*-T$), which is the deviation of the detection steering torque T from the command steering torque T^* , is acquired from the torque deviation computing section 22, and the absolute value $|\Delta T|$ of the torque deviation is determined (Step S21).

[0086] Further, the absolute value $|T|$ of the detection steering torque T is determined (Step S22). Then, the absolute torque deviation value $|\Delta T|$ is compared with a torque deviation threshold (e.g., 2 Nm) (Step S23). If the absolute torque deviation value $|\Delta T|$ is less than the torque deviation threshold (NO in Step S23), the absolute detection steering torque value $|T|$ is compared with a torque threshold (e.g., 6 Nm) (Step S24). If the absolute detection steering torque value $|T|$ is less than the torque threshold (NO in Step S24), it is determined that no abnormality occurs.

[0087] On the other hand, if the absolute torque deviation value $|\Delta T|$ is equal to or greater than the torque deviation threshold (YES in Step S23), or if the absolute detection torque value $|T|$ is equal to or greater than the torque threshold (YES in Step S24), it is determined that the abnormality occurs. Then, the abnormality judging section 30 applies the information of the abnormality occurrence to the command electric current value generating section 31.

[0088] Upon reception of the information of the abnormality occurrence, the command electric current value generating section 31 sets the γ -axis command electric current value I_{γ}^* at the predetermined constant value (zero in this embodiment) (Step S25). Thus, the motor electric current is controlled to be zero. This makes it possible to perform the steering operation (manual steering operation) by operating the steering wheel 10, while preventing the motor 3 from becoming a load.

[0089] In this manner, the occurrence of the abnormality is judged based on the absolute torque deviation value $|\Delta T|$ and the absolute detection steering torque value $|T|$. If the abnormality occurs, the γ -axis command electric current value I_{γ}^* is set at zero to permit the manual steering operation. This additionally provides a fail-safe function for prevention of unstable control when the abnormality occurs.

[0090] Fig. 11 is a block diagram for explaining the construction of an electric power steering apparatus according to another embodiment of the present invention. In Fig. 11, components corresponding to those shown in Fig. 1 will be denoted by the same reference characters as in Fig. 1.

[0091] In this embodiment, an addition angle computing section 40 which computes the addition angle α based on the steering torque T detected by the torque sensor 1 is provided as a functional section of the microcomputer 11. The addition angle computing section 40 may include a map which predefines the characteristics of the addition angle α with respect to the detection steering torque T .

[0092] The addition angle α is set at zero, for example, for a detection steering torque T falling within a predetermined torque dead zone NTR ($-A \leq T \leq A$, wherein A is a constant and $A > 0$). For a positive detection steering torque T falling outside the torque dead zone NTR, the addition angle α is set at a positive value for a positive detection steering torque T falling outside the torque dead zone NTR. Further, the addition angle α is not greater than a predetermined upper limit UL, and is increased as the detection steering torque T increases. For a negative steering torque T falling outside the torque dead zone NTR, the addition angle α is set at a negative value. The absolute value of the negative addition angle α is increased as the absolute value of the steering torque T increases. However, the addition angle α is not less than a predetermined lower limit LL.

[0093] With this arrangement, the addition angle α determined according to the steering torque T is added to the control angle θ_C in each computing cycle. As a result, a load angle θ_L is set according to the steering angle T . Thus, the motor 3 properly generates the steering assist force, which is in turn transmitted to the steering mechanism 2 via the speed reduction mechanism 7. In the case of the electric power steering apparatus, the torque to be generated by the motor 3 corresponds to the steering torque T . Therefore, the motor 3 can generate the torque as desired by setting the addition angle α based on the steering torque T .

[0094] Fig. 12 is a block diagram for explaining the construction of a motor controller according to further another embodiment of the present invention. In Fig. 12, components corresponding to those shown in Fig. 1 will be denoted by the same reference characters as in Fig. 1.

[0095] In this embodiment, a command electric current value generating section 31A generates a δ -axis command electric current value I_{δ}^* based on the steering torque T detected by the torque sensor 1 and the vehicle speed detected by the vehicle speed sensor 6 while generating a γ -axis command electric current value of $I_{\gamma}^* = 0$. The δ -axis command electric current value I_{δ}^* corresponds to an assist torque to be generated by the motor 3.

[0096] The δ -axis command electric current value I_{δ}^* is positive, for example, when the steering assist force is to be generated by the motor 3 for rightward steering. The δ -axis command electric current value I_{δ}^* is negative, when the steering assist force is to be generated by the motor 3 for leftward steering.

[0097] The δ -axis command electric current value I_{δ}^* is positive for a positive steering torque T (a torque for the rightward steering), and is negative for a negative steering torque T (a torque for the leftward steering). When the steering torque T has a very small value falling within a range (torque dead zone) of $-T_1$ to T_1 (e.g., $T_1 = 0.4 \text{ N}\cdot\text{m}$), the δ -axis command electric current value I_{δ}^* is set at zero. Outside the torque dead zone, the δ -axis command electric current value I_{δ}^* is determined within a range between a predetermined lower limit and a predetermined upper limit so that the absolute value thereof is increased as the absolute value of the steering torque T increases. Further, the δ -axis command electric current value I_{δ}^* is determined so that the absolute value thereof is reduced as the vehicle speed detected by the vehicle speed sensor 6 increases. Thus, a greater steering assist force is generated during lower speed traveling, and a smaller steering assist force is generated during higher speed traveling.

[0098] In this embodiment, the microcomputer 11 includes, as functional sections, an angle estimation electric current generating section 45, an electric current superposing section 46, a high-pass filter (HPF) 47, a low-pass filter (LPF) 48 and a load angle estimating section 49.

[0099] The angle estimation electric current generating section 45 generates an estimation electric current value for estimation of a load angle θ_L . The estimation electric current value is the value of a high-frequency electric current having a frequency not less than the maximum frequency of a load torque applied from the steering mechanism 2. The estimation electric current value is superposed on the δ -axis command electric current value I_{δ}^* in the electric current superposing section 46. The δ -axis command electric current value I_{δ}^* superposed with the estimation electric current value is applied to the electric current deviation computing section 32.

[0100] The estimation electric current value (high-frequency electric current value) is superposed on the δ -axis command electric current value I_{δ}^* to thereby generate a high frequency torque component, which is in turn transmitted to the steering mechanism 2 from the motor 3 via the speed reduction mechanism 7. As a result, the torque sensor 1 detects the high-frequency component for the estimation electric current value as well as the steering torque (applied to the steering wheel 10 by the driver). In other words, the high-frequency component for the estimation electric current

value as well as the steering torque are superposed on an output signal of the torque sensor 1. The high-frequency component is extracted by the high-pass filter 47, and supplied to the load angle estimating section 49.

[0101] On the other hand, the low-pass filter 48 removes the high-frequency component, and extracts the steering torque component, which is in turn supplied to the command electric current value generating section 31A. Thus, the command electric current value generating section 31A sets the δ -axis command electric current value I_{δ}^* according to the detection steering torque T without any influence of the estimation electric current value.

[0102] The load angle estimating section 49 estimates the load angle θ_L based on the high-frequency component for the estimation electric current value applied from the high-pass filter 47 and the estimation electric current value generated by the angle estimation electric current generating section 45, and then generates an estimation load angle $\theta_L^{\wedge}$.

[0103] As can be understood from Fig. 2 described above, the orthogonal projection of the δ -axis electric current I_{δ} to the q-axis is defined as a q-axis electric current I_q , and there is a relationship of $I_q = I_{\delta} \cdot \cos \theta_L$ among the δ -axis electric current I_{δ} , the q-axis electric current I_q and the load angle θ_L .

[0104] There is a similar relationship for the estimation electric current value. Since the q-axis electric current I_q corresponds to the torque to be generated by the motor 3, the torque sensor 1 detects a high-frequency torque component that corresponds to a component of the high-frequency estimation electric current value projected to the q-axis (orthogonal projection).

[0105] Therefore, the load angle estimating section 49 estimates the load angle θ_L based on the estimation electric current value (δ -axis electric current component) generated by the angle estimation electric current generating section 45 and the high-frequency torque component (corresponding to the q-axis electric current component) for the estimation electric current value. As indicated by a two-dot-and-dash line in Fig. 12, a high-frequency component of a δ -axis detection electric current I_{δ} generated by the UVW/ $\gamma\delta$ converting section 36 may be extracted by the high-pass filter 47, and this δ -axis electric current high-frequency component may be used instead of the high-frequency component of the steering torque for the estimation of the load angle θ_L .

[0106] The estimation load angle $\theta_L^{\wedge}$ thus estimated by the load angle estimation section 49 is added to the previous value $\theta_C(n-1)$ of the control angle θ_C in the control angle computing section 26, whereby a current value $\theta_C(n) = \theta_C(n-1) + \theta_L^{\wedge}$ of the control angle θ_C is calculated. In this embodiment, the estimation load angle $\theta_L^{\wedge}$ is employed as the addition angle to be added to the control angle θ_C . The estimation load angle $\theta_L^{\wedge}$ corresponds to a difference between the previous value $\theta_C(n-1)$ of the control angle θ_C and the current rotor angle θ_M .

[0107] It is herein assumed, for example, that $\theta_C(n-1) = \theta_M(n-1)$ is established in the preceding control cycle $n-1$. Then, a change $\theta_M(n) - \theta_M(n-1)$ ($= \theta_M(n) - \theta_C(n-1)$) in the rotor angle θ_M during a period from the preceding control cycle to the current control cycle is determined as the estimation load angle $\theta_L^{\wedge}$. Therefore, the rotor angle in the current control cycle is $\theta_M(n) = \theta_M(n-1) + \theta_L^{\wedge}$ ($= \theta_C(n-1) + \theta_L^{\wedge}$). Hence, the estimation load angle $\theta_L^{\wedge}$ is added to the previous control angle $\theta_C(n-1)$ to provide the control angle $\theta_C(n) = \theta_C(n-1) + \theta_L^{\wedge}$ in the current control cycle, whereby the control angle θ_C can approach the rotor angle θ_M or coincide with the rotor angle θ_M .

[0108] The $\gamma\delta$ /UVW converting section 34 and the UVW/ $\gamma\delta$ converting section 36 each perform a coordinate conversion computing operation with the use of the control angle θ_C thus computed. As previously described, the control angle θ_C is close to (or equal to) the actual rotor angle θ_M , so that the coordinate conversion computing operation can be accurately performed. Thus, the motor 3 can be smoothly driven without the use of the rotation angle sensor, making it possible to provide excellent steering feeling.

[0109] While the three embodiments of the present invention have thus been described, the present invention may be embodied in other ways. Although the embodiments described above are directed to the arrangement in which the motor 3 is driven only by the sensorless control without the provision of the rotation angle sensor, a rotation angle sensor such as a resolver may be provided, and the sensorless control described above may be performed in case of malfunction of the rotation angle sensor. This makes it possible to continuously drive the motor 3 for continuous steering assist even during the malfunction of the rotation angle sensor.

[0110] In this case, when the rotation angle sensor is used, the δ -axis command electric current value I_{δ}^* may be generated based on the steering torque and the vehicle speed according to a predetermined assist characteristic by the command electric current value generating section 31, 31A (i.e., the function of the command electric current value generating section 31A in the embodiment shown in Fig. 12).

[0111] Where the output signal of the rotation angle sensor is used, there is no need to employ the virtual rotating coordinate system defined with respect to the control angle θ_C without the need for using the control angle θ_C , because the output signal determines the rotor angle θ_M . That is, it is merely necessary to control the d-axis electric current and the q-axis electric current. Where a $\gamma\delta$ electric current controlling section which performs electric current control with respect to the $\gamma\delta$ -axes and a dq electric current controlling section which performs electric current control with respect to the dq-axes were both provided, however, a major portion of the memory (ROM) would be used for storing programs in microcomputer 11. Therefore, it is preferred to provide a common electric current controlling section to be shared by the $\gamma\delta$ electric current controlling section and the dq electric current controlling section by sharing an angular variable. More specifically, the angular variable of the common electric current controlling section is used as a dq-coordinate

angle when the rotation angle sensor is normal, and is used as a $\gamma\delta$ -coordinate angle when the rotation angle sensor malfunctions. Thus, the use of the memory is suppressed, thereby making it possible to correspondingly reduce the capacity of the memory for cost reduction.

[0112] In the first embodiment described above, the addition/subtraction judging section 27 and the addition/subtraction factor multiplying section 25 are provided, and the sign of the addition angle α is properly determined to rapidly approximate the steering torque T to the command steering torque T*. Even without this arrangement, the steering torque T can be approximated to the command steering torque T*, though there may be a slight delay.

[0113] In the first embodiment described above, the γ -axis command electric current value I_{γ}^* is set at zero when the abnormality judging section 30 determines that the abnormality occurs. Alternatively, a relay may be provided in a power supply line between the driving circuit 12 and the motor 3, and shut off when the occurrence of the abnormality is detected.

[0114] The embodiments described above are directed to exemplary cases in which the present invention is applied to the electric power steering apparatus, but the present invention is applicable to motor control for an electric pump hydraulic power steering apparatus. Further, the present invention is applicable to control of a brushless motor provided in a vehicle steering apparatus such as a steer-by-wire (SBW) system or a variable gear ratio (VGR) steering system other than the power steering apparatus. Of course, the inventive motor controller is applicable not only to the motor control for the vehicle steering apparatus but also to motor control in other applications.

[0115] While the present invention has been described in detail by way of the embodiments thereof, it should be understood that these embodiments are merely illustrative of the technical principles of the present invention but not limitative of the invention.

REFERENCE SIGNS LIST

[0116]

1:	Torque sensor
3:	Motor
4:	Steering angle sensor
5:	Motor controller
11:	Microcomputer
26:	Control angle computing section
50:	Rotor
51,52,53:	Stator coils
55:	Stator

Claims

1. A motor controller for controlling a motor (3) including a rotor (50) and a stator (55) opposed to the rotor, the motor controller comprising:

an electric current driving unit (31 to 36; 31A; 45) which is configured to drive the motor (3) with an axis electric current value defined in a rotating coordinate system defined with respect to a control angle (θ_c) that is a rotation angle for control;

characterized by

a control angle computing unit (26) which is configured to compute a current value of the control angle (θ_c) by adding an addition angle to a previous value of the control angle (θ_c) in each predetermined computing cycle, wherein by the addition of the addition angle the control angle (θ_c) is updated in each computing cycle; and an addition angle computing unit (22, 23) which is configured to compute the addition angle according to a torque to be generated by the motor (3) or a response of the motor (3) to the axis electric current value, wherein the motor (3) is a three-phase motor, the rotating coordinate system defined with respect to a control angle (θ_c) is a virtual two-phase rotating coordinate system having a γ -axis and a δ -axis, and a three-phase stationary coordinate system having a U phase axis, a V phase axis and a W phase axis is defined, and coordinate conversion between the three-phase stationary coordinate system and the virtual two-phase rotating coordinate system is performed with the use of the control angle (θ_c).

2. The motor controller according to claim 1, further comprising a limiting unit (24) which is configured to limit the addition angle.

3. The motor controller according to claim 1, wherein
the electric current driving unit (31 to 36; 31A; 45) is configured to generate an axis electric current value including
an angle estimation electric current value, and
the addition angle computing unit (22, 23) further includes a load angle computing unit (45) which is configured to
compute a load angle as the addition angle based on a response of the motor (3) to the angle estimation electric
current value, the load angle being a difference between the control angle (θ_c) and a rotation angle of the rotor.

4. A vehicle steering apparatus comprising:

a motor (3) which is configured to apply a driving force to a steering mechanism (2) of a motor vehicle;
a torque detecting unit (1) which is configured to detect a steering torque applied to an operation member (10)
of the motor vehicle; and
a motor controller (5) as recited in any one of the claims 1 to 3 for controlling the motor (3);
wherein the addition angle computing unit (22, 23) is configured to compute the addition angle according to the
steering torque detected by the torque detecting unit (1).

5. The vehicle steering apparatus according to claim 4, further comprising:

a command steering torque setting unit (21) which is configured to set a command steering torque;
wherein the addition angle computing unit (22, 23) is configured to compute the addition angle according to a
deviation of the steering torque detected by the torque detecting unit (1) from the command steering torque set
by the command steering torque setting unit (21).

6. The vehicle steering apparatus according to claim 5, further comprising:

a steering angle detecting unit (4) which is configured to detect a steering angle of the operation member (10);
wherein the command steering torque setting unit (21) is configured to set the command steering torque ac-
cording to the steering angle detected by the steering angle detecting unit (4).

7. The vehicle steering apparatus according to claim 5 or 6, wherein the command steering torque setting unit (21) is
configured to set the command steering torque according to a vehicle speed of the motor vehicle detected by a
vehicle speed detecting unit (6) which is configured to detect the vehicle speed of the motor vehicle.

8. The vehicle steering apparatus according to any one of claims 5 to 7, further comprising:
an abnormality judging unit (30) which is configured to determine occurrence of an abnormality when an absolute
value of a deviation of the steering torque detected by the torque detecting unit (1) from the command steering
torque set by the command steering torque setting unit (21) is not less than a predetermined deviation threshold,
or when an absolute value of the steering torque detected by the torque detecting unit (1) is not less than a prede-
termined torque threshold.

Patentansprüche

1. Motorsteuerungsvorrichtung zur Steuerung eines Motors (3), der einen Rotor (50) und einen dem Rotor (50) ge-
genüberliegenden Stator (55) aufweist, wobei die Motorsteuerungsvorrichtung aufweist:

eine elektrische Stromansteuerungseinheit (31 bis 36; 31A; 45), die konfiguriert ist, den Motor (3) mit einem
elektrischen Achsenstromwert anzusteuern, der in einem rotierenden Koordinatensystem definiert ist, das in
Bezug auf einen Steuerungswinkel (θ_c) definiert ist, der ein Drehwinkel zur Steuerung ist,

gekennzeichnet durch

eine Steuerungswinkelberechnungseinheit (26), die konfiguriert ist, einen gegenwärtigen Wert des Steuerungs-
winkels (θ_c) durch Addieren eines Additionswinkels zu einem vorhergehenden Wert des Steuerungswinkels
(θ_c) in jedem vorbestimmten Berechnungszyklus zu berechnen, wobei durch die Addition des Additionswinkels
der Steuerungswinkel (θ_c) in jedem Berechnungszyklus aktualisiert wird, und

eine Additionswinkelberechnungseinheit (22, 23), die konfiguriert ist, den Additionswinkel entsprechend einem
Drehmoment, das durch den Motor (3) zu erzeugen ist, oder einer Antwort des Motors (3) auf den elektrischen
Achsenstromwert zu berechnen,

wobei der Motor (3) ein Drei-Phasen-Motor ist, das in Bezug auf den Steuerungswinkel (θ_c) definierte rotierende

Koordinatensystem ein virtuelles rotierendes Zwei-Phasen-System mit einer γ -Achse und einer δ -Achse ist, und ein stationäres Drei-Phasen-System mit einer U-Phasen-Achse, einer V-Phasen-Achse und einer W-Phasen-Achse definiert ist, und
 eine Koordinatenumwandlung zwischen dem stationären Drei-Phasen-Koordinatensystem und dem virtuellen rotierenden Zwei-Phasen-Koordinatensystem unter Verwendung des Steuerungswinkels (θ_c) durchgeführt wird.

2. Motorsteuerungsvorrichtung nach Anspruch 1, weiterhin mit einer Begrenzungseinheit (**24**), die konfiguriert ist, den Additionswinkel zu begrenzen.

3. Motorsteuerungsvorrichtung nach Anspruch 1, wobei die elektrische Stromansteuerungseinheit (**31 bis 36; 31A; 45**) konfiguriert ist einen elektrischen Achsenstromwert einschließlich eines elektrischen Winkelschätzstromwerts zu erzeugen, und die Additionswinkelberechnungseinheit (**22, 23**) weiterhin eine Lastwinkelberechnungseinheit (**45**) aufweist, die konfiguriert ist, einen Lastwinkel als einen Additionswinkel auf der Grundlage einer Antwort des Motors (**3**) auf den elektrischen Winkelschätzstromwert zu berechnen, wobei der Lastwinkel eine Differenz zwischen dem Steuerungswinkel (θ_c) und einem Drehwinkel des Rotors ist.

4. Fahrzeuglenkgerät mit einem Motor (**3**), der konfiguriert ist, einem Lenkmechanismus (**2**) eines Motorfahrzeugs mit einer Antriebskraft zu beaufschlagen, einer Drehmomenterfassungseinheit (**1**), die konfiguriert ist, ein Lenkdrehmoment zu erfassen, mit dem ein Bedienungselement (**10**) des Motorfahrzeugs beaufschlagt wird, und einer Motorsteuerungsvorrichtung (**5**) nach einem der Ansprüche 1 bis 3 zur Steuerung des Motors (**3**), wobei die Additionswinkelberechnungseinheit (**22, 23**) konfiguriert ist, den Additionswinkel entsprechend dem durch die Drehmomenterfassungseinheit (**1**) erfassten Lenkdrehmoment zu berechnen.

5. Fahrzeuglenkgerät nach Anspruch 4, weiterhin mit:

einer Befehlslenkdrehmomenteinstellungseinheit (**21**), die konfiguriert ist, ein Befehlslenkdrehmoment einzustellen, wobei die Additionswinkelberechnungseinheit (**22, 23**) konfiguriert ist, den Additionswinkel entsprechend einer Abweichung des durch Drehmomenterfassungseinheit (**1**) erfassten Lenkdrehmoments von dem durch die Befehlslenkdrehmomenteinstellungseinheit (**21**) eingestellten Befehlslenkdrehmoment zu berechnen.

6. Fahrzeuglenkgerät nach Anspruch 5, weiterhin mit:

einer Lenkwinkelerfassungseinheit (**4**), die konfiguriert ist, einen Lenkwinkel des Bedienungselements (**10**) zu erfassen, wobei die Befehlslenkdrehmomenteinstellungseinheit (**21**) konfiguriert ist, das Befehlslenkdrehmoment entsprechend dem durch die Lenkwinkelerfassungseinheit (**4**) erfassten Lenkwinkel einzustellen.

7. Fahrzeuglenkgerät nach Anspruch 5 oder 6, wobei die Befehlslenkdrehmomenteinstellungseinheit (**21**) konfiguriert ist, das Befehlslenkdrehmoment entsprechend einer durch eine zur Erfassung der Fahrzeuggeschwindigkeit des Motorfahrzeugs konfigurierten Fahrzeuggeschwindigkeitserfassungseinheit (**6**) erfassten Fahrzeuggeschwindigkeit des Motorfahrzeugs einzustellen.

8. Fahrzeuglenkgerät nach einem der Ansprüche 5 bis 7, weiterhin mit: einer Anomalitätsbeurteilungseinheit (**30**), die konfiguriert ist, ein Auftreten einer Anomalität zu bestimmen, wenn ein absoluter Wert einer Abweichung des durch die Drehmomenterfassungseinheit (**1**) erfassten Lenkdrehmoments von dem durch die Befehlslenkdrehmomenteinstellungseinheit (**21**) eingestellten Befehlslenkdrehmoment nicht weniger als ein vorbestimmter Abweichungsschwellenwert ist, oder wenn ein absoluter Wert des durch die Drehmomenterfassungseinheit (**1**) erfassten Drehmoment nicht weniger als ein vorbestimmter Drehmomentschwellenwert ist.

Revendications

1. Organe de commande de moteur pour commander un moteur (3) comprenant un rotor (50) et un stator (55) opposé au rotor, l'organe de commande de moteur comprenant :

une unité d'entraînement de courant électrique (31 à 36 ; 31A ; 45) qui est configurée pour entraîner le moteur (3) avec une valeur de courant électrique d'axe définie dans un système de coordonnées de rotation défini par rapport à un angle de commande (θ_c) qui est un angle de rotation pour commande ;

caractérisé par :

une unité de calcul d'angle de commande (26) qui est configurée pour calculer une valeur de courant de l'angle de commande (θ_c) en ajoutant un angle d'addition à une valeur précédente de l'angle de commande (θ_c) dans chaque cycle de calcul prédéterminé, dans lequel grâce à l'addition de l'angle d'addition, l'angle de commande (θ_c) est mis à jour dans chaque cycle de calcul ; et

une unité de calcul d'angle d'addition (22, 23) qui est configurée pour calculer l'angle d'addition selon un couple à générer par le moteur (3) ou en réponse du moteur (3) à la valeur de courant électrique d'axe, dans lequel le moteur (3) est un moteur triphasé, le système de coordonnées de rotation défini par rapport à un angle de commande (θ_c) est un système de coordonnées de rotation biphasé virtuel ayant un axe Y et un angle δ , et un système de coordonnées fixe triphasé ayant un axe de phase U, un axe de phase V et un axe de phase W est défini, et

la conversion de coordonnées entre le système de coordonnées fixe triphasé et le système de coordonnées de rotation biphasé virtuel est réalisée à l'aide de l'angle de commande (θ_c).

2. Organe de commande de moteur selon la revendication 1, comprenant en outre une unité de limitation (24) qui est configurée pour limiter l'angle d'addition.

3. Organe de commande de moteur selon la revendication 1, dans lequel :

l'unité de commande d'entraînement de courant électrique (31 à 36 ; 31A ; 45) est configurée pour générer une valeur de courant électrique d'axe comprenant une valeur de courant électrique d'estimation d'angle, et l'unité de calcul d'angle d'addition (22, 23) comprend en outre une unité de calcul d'angle de charge (45) qui est configurée pour calculer un angle de charge en tant qu'angle d'addition sur la base d'une réponse du moteur (3) à la valeur de courant électrique d'estimation d'angle, l'angle de charge étant une différence entre l'angle de commande (θ_c) et un angle de rotation du rotor.

4. Appareil de direction de véhicule comprenant :

un moteur (3) qui est configuré pour appliquer une force d'entraînement sur un mécanisme de direction (2) d'un véhicule à moteur ;

une unité de détection de couple (1) qui est configurée pour détecter un couple de direction appliqué sur un élément de commande (10) du véhicule à moteur ; et

un organe de commande de moteur (5) selon l'une quelconque des revendications 1 à 3, pour commander le moteur (3) ;

dans lequel l'unité de calcul d'angle d'addition (22, 23) est configurée pour calculer l'angle d'addition selon le couple de direction détecté par l'unité de détection de couple (1).

5. Appareil de direction de véhicule selon la revendication 4, comprenant en outre :

une unité de réglage de couple de direction de commande (21) qui est configurée pour régler un couple de direction de commande ;

dans lequel l'unité de calcul d'angle d'addition (22, 23) est configurée pour calculer l'angle d'addition selon une déviation du couple de direction détecté par l'unité de détection de couple (1) du couple de direction de commande réglé par l'unité de réglage de couple de direction de commande (21).

6. Appareil de direction de véhicule selon la revendication 5, comprenant en outre :

une unité de détection d'angle de direction (4) qui est configurée pour détecter un angle de direction de l'élément de commande (10) ;

dans lequel l'unité de réglage de couple de direction de commande (21) est configurée pour régler le couple de direction de commande selon l'angle de direction détecté par l'unité de détection d'angle de direction (4).

7. Appareil de direction de véhicule selon la revendication 5 ou 6, dans lequel l'unité de réglage de couple de direction de commande (21) est configurée pour régler le couple de direction de commande selon une vitesse de véhicule du véhicule à moteur détectée par l'unité de détection de vitesse de véhicule (6) qui est configurée pour détecter la vitesse de véhicule du véhicule à moteur.
8. Appareil de direction de véhicule selon l'une quelconque des revendications 5 à 7, comprenant en outre :
une unité d'évaluation d'anomalie (30) qui est configurée pour déterminer l'occurrence d'une anomalie lorsqu'une valeur absolue d'une déviation du couple de direction détecté par l'unité de détection de couple (1) du couple de direction de commande réglé par l'unité de réglage de couple de direction de commande (21) n'est pas inférieure à un seuil de déviation prédéterminé, ou lorsqu'une valeur absolue du couple de direction détecté par l'unité de détection de couple (1) n'est pas inférieure à un seuil de couple prédéterminé.

FIG. 1

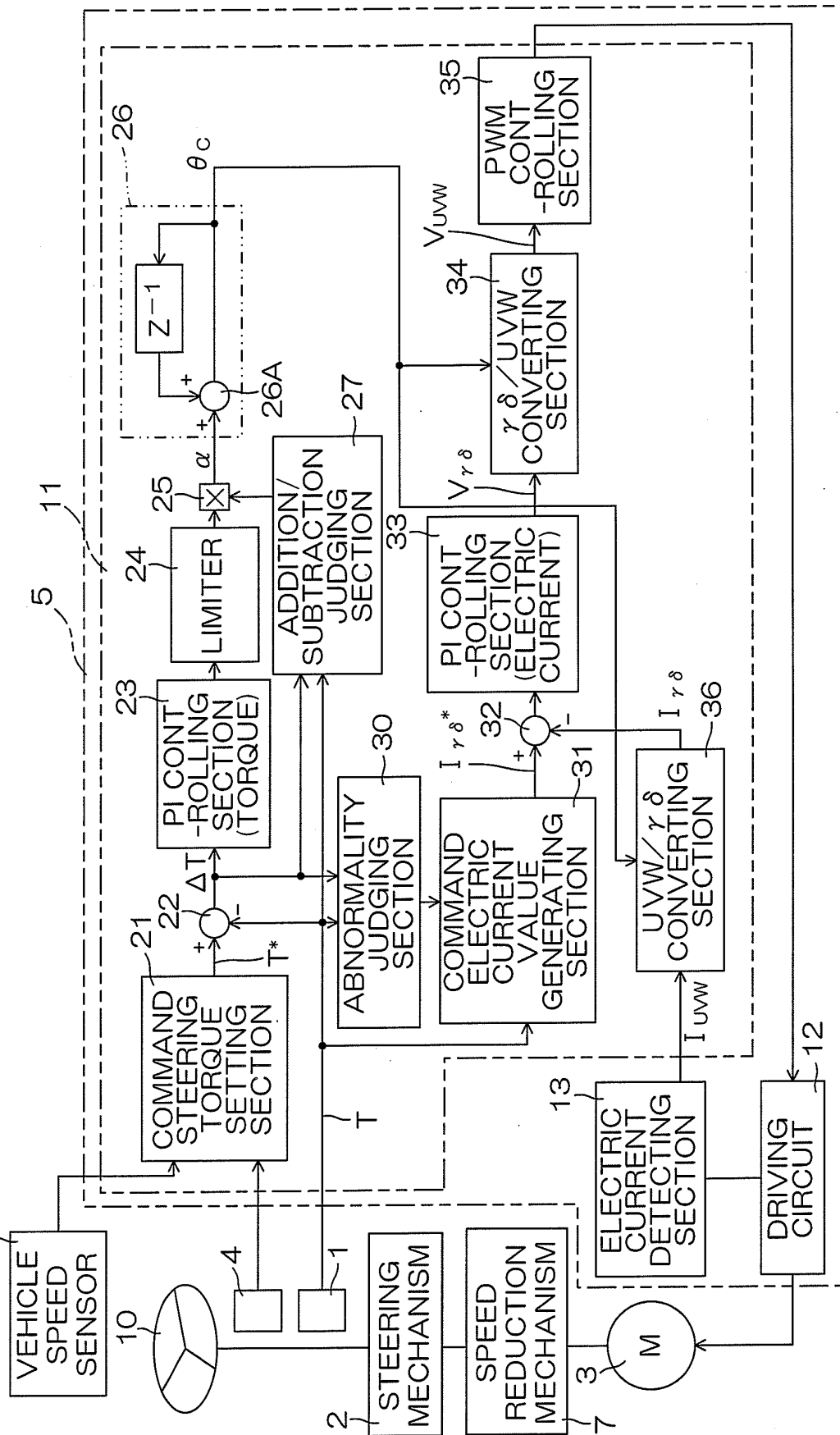


FIG. 2

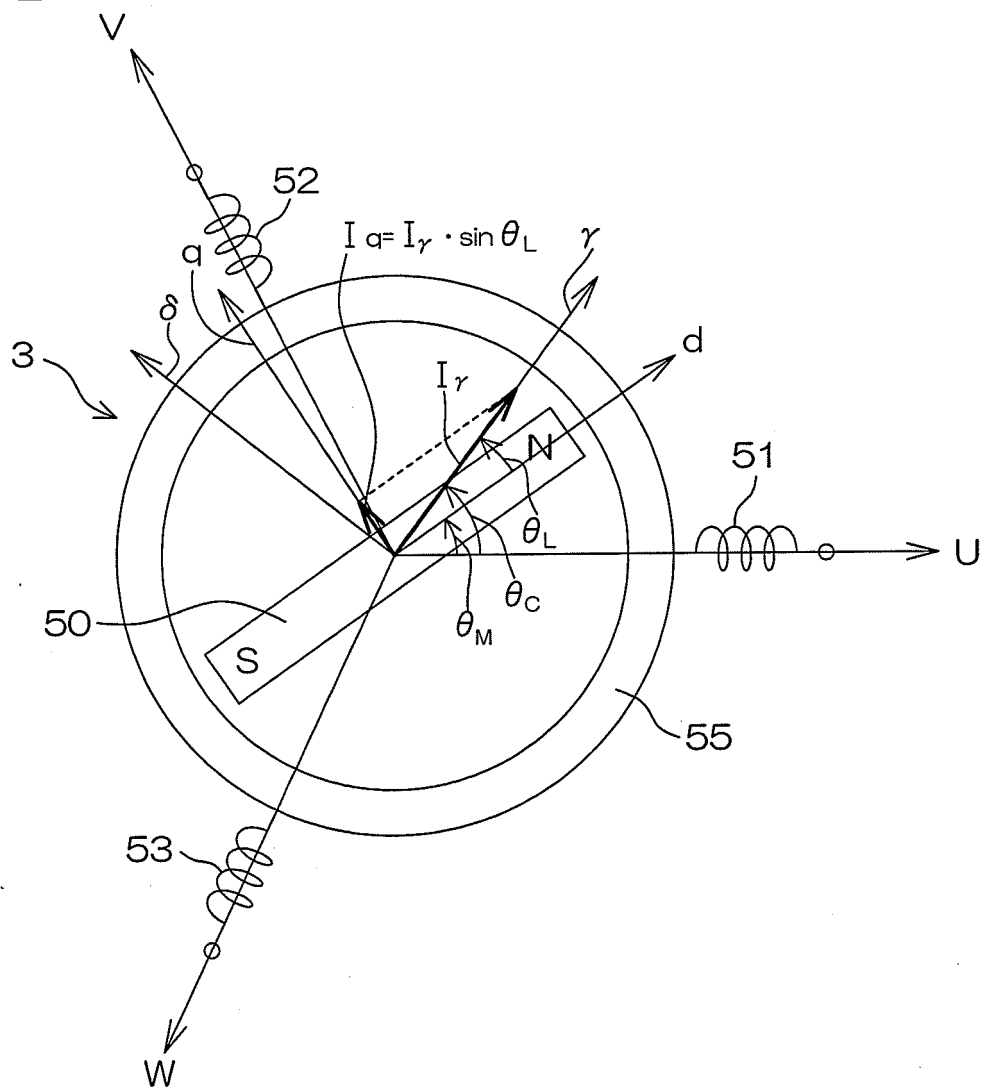


FIG. 3

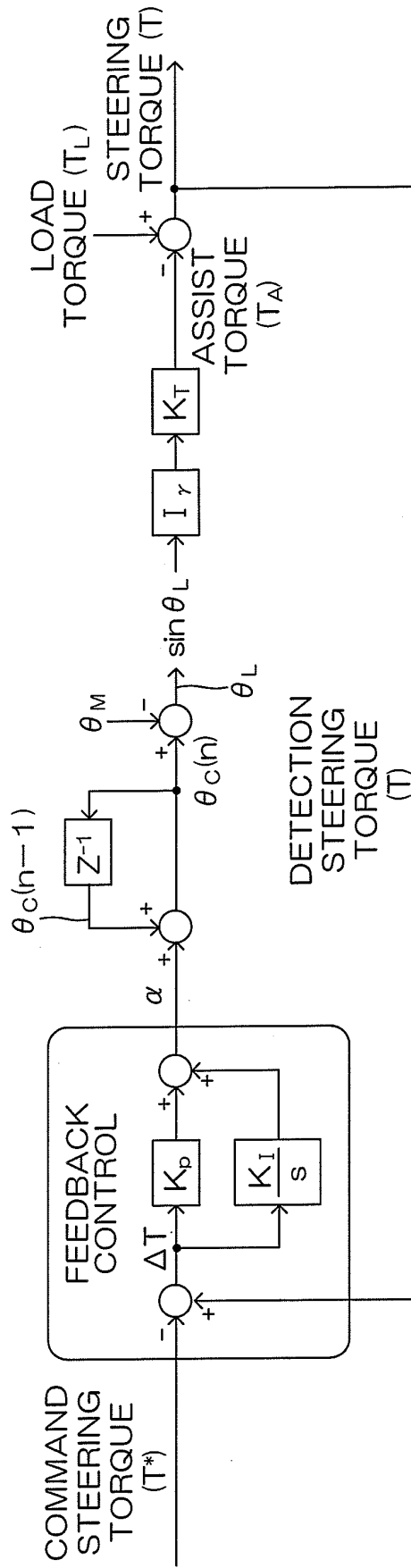


FIG. 4

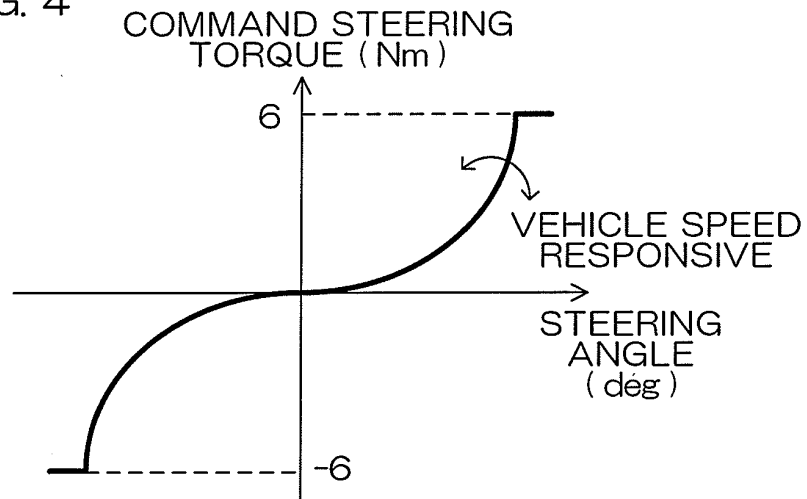


FIG. 5

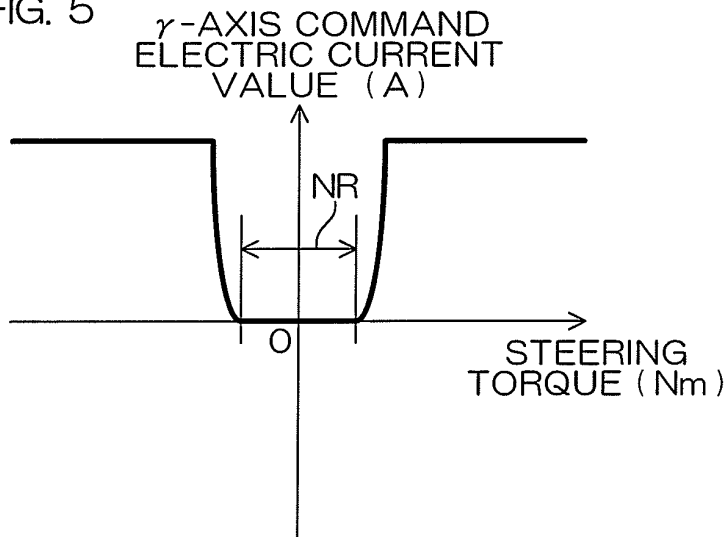


FIG. 6

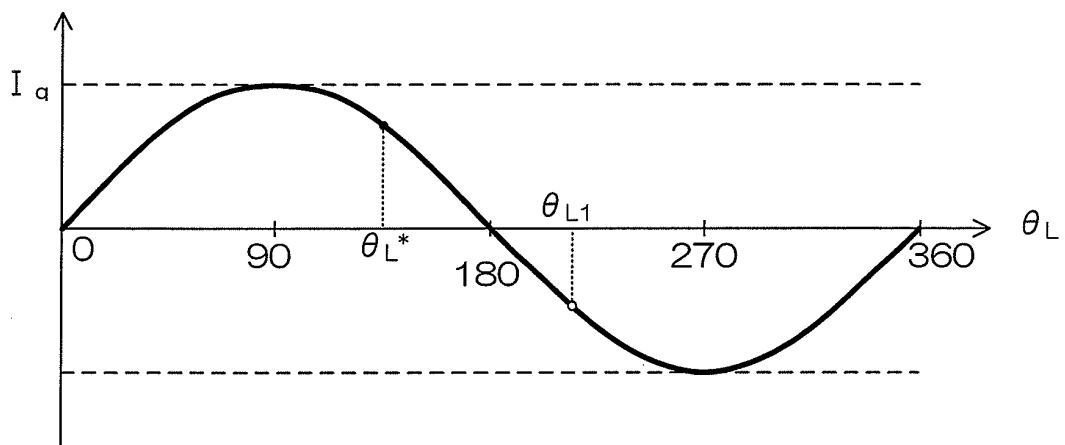


FIG. 7

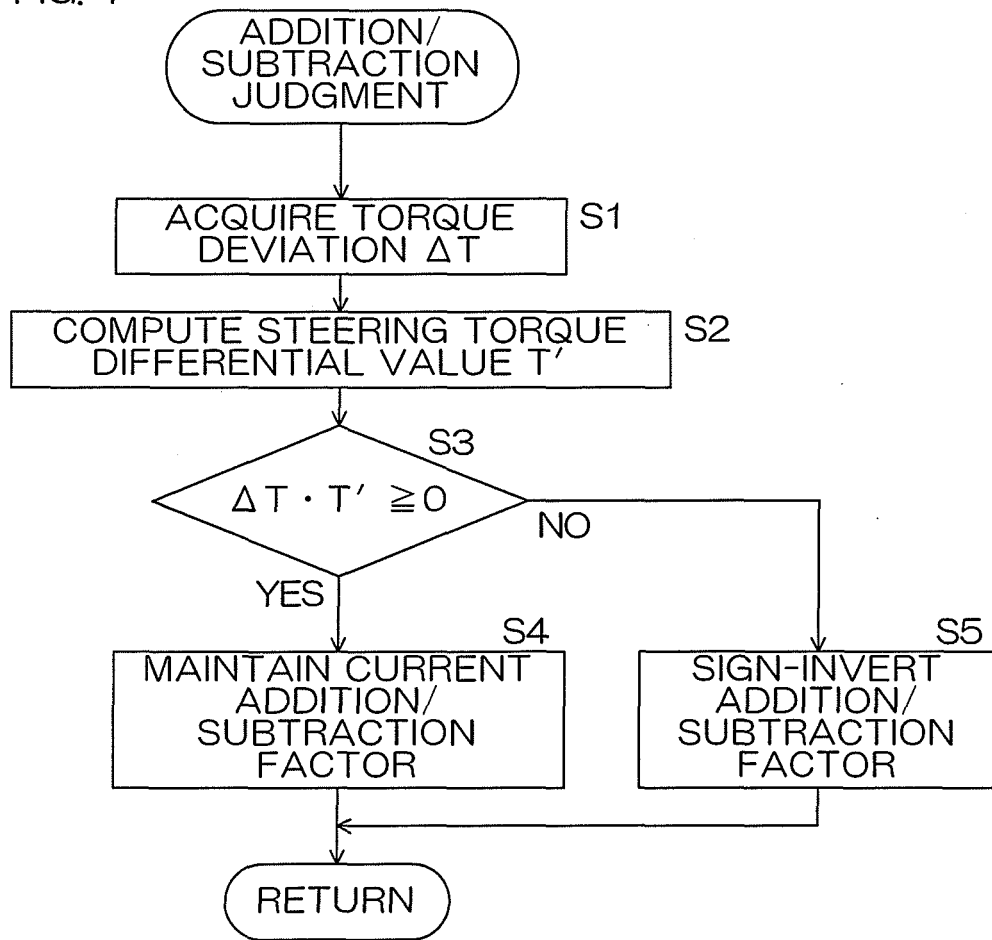


FIG. 8

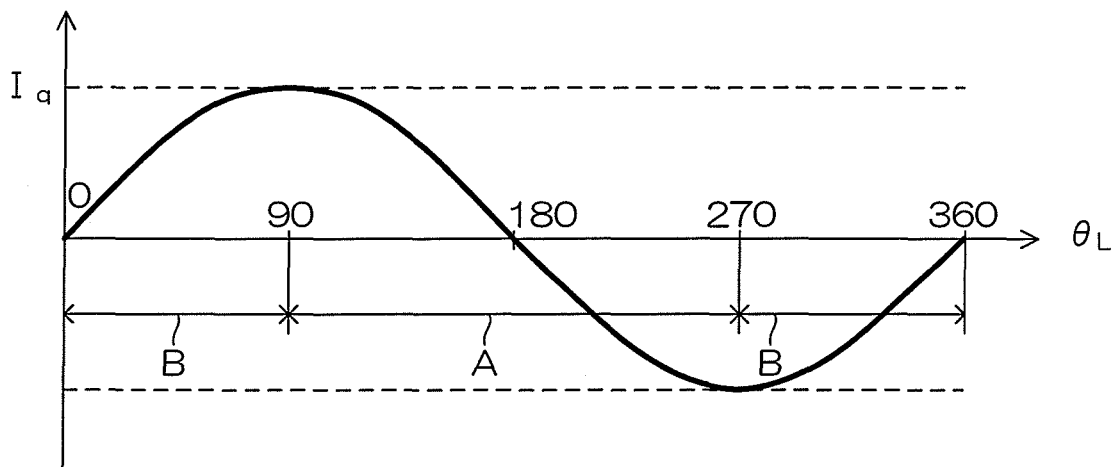


FIG. 9

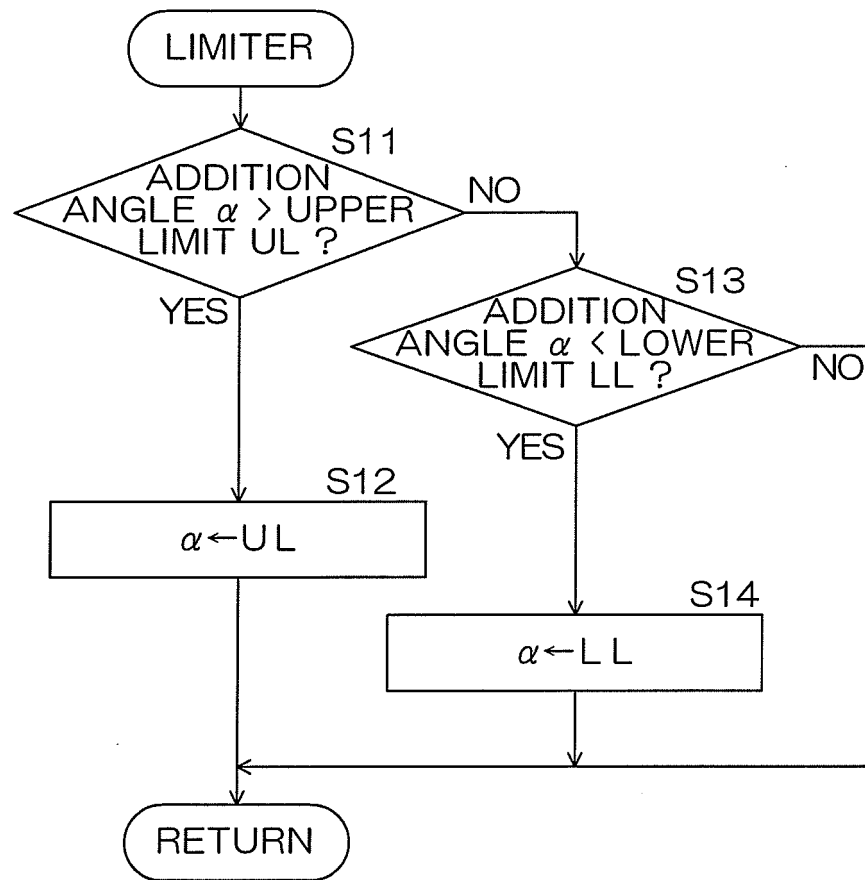


FIG. 10

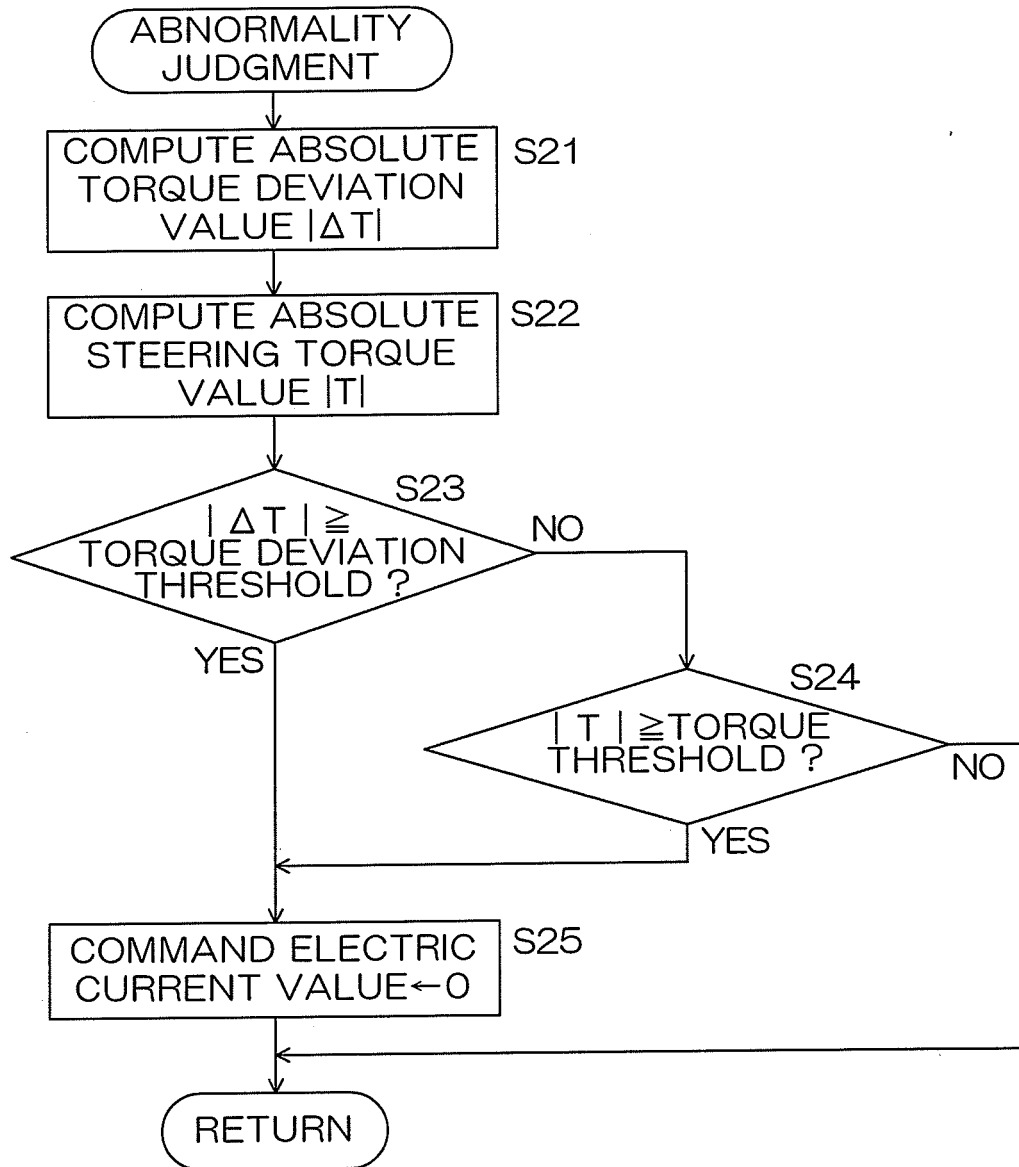
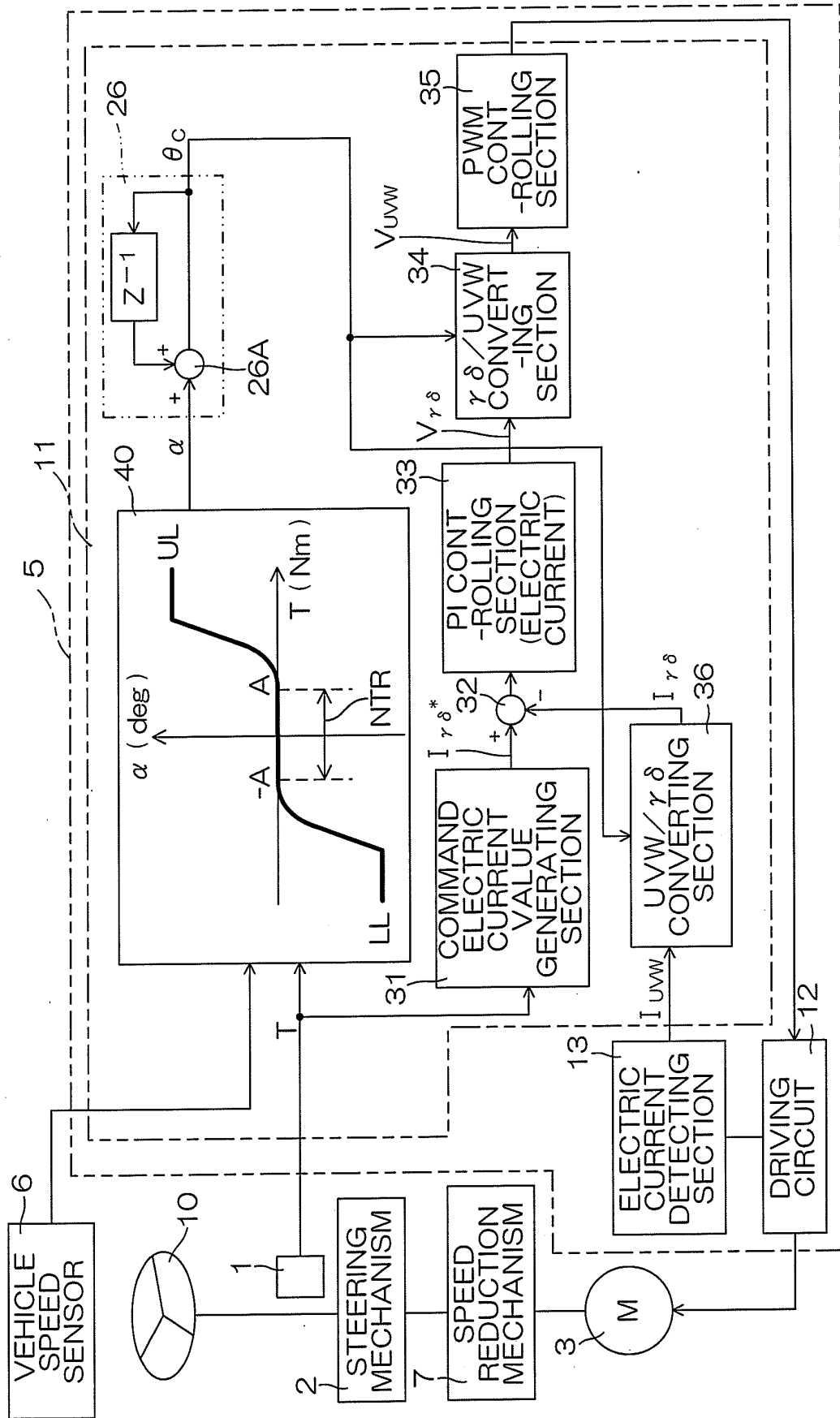


FIG. 11



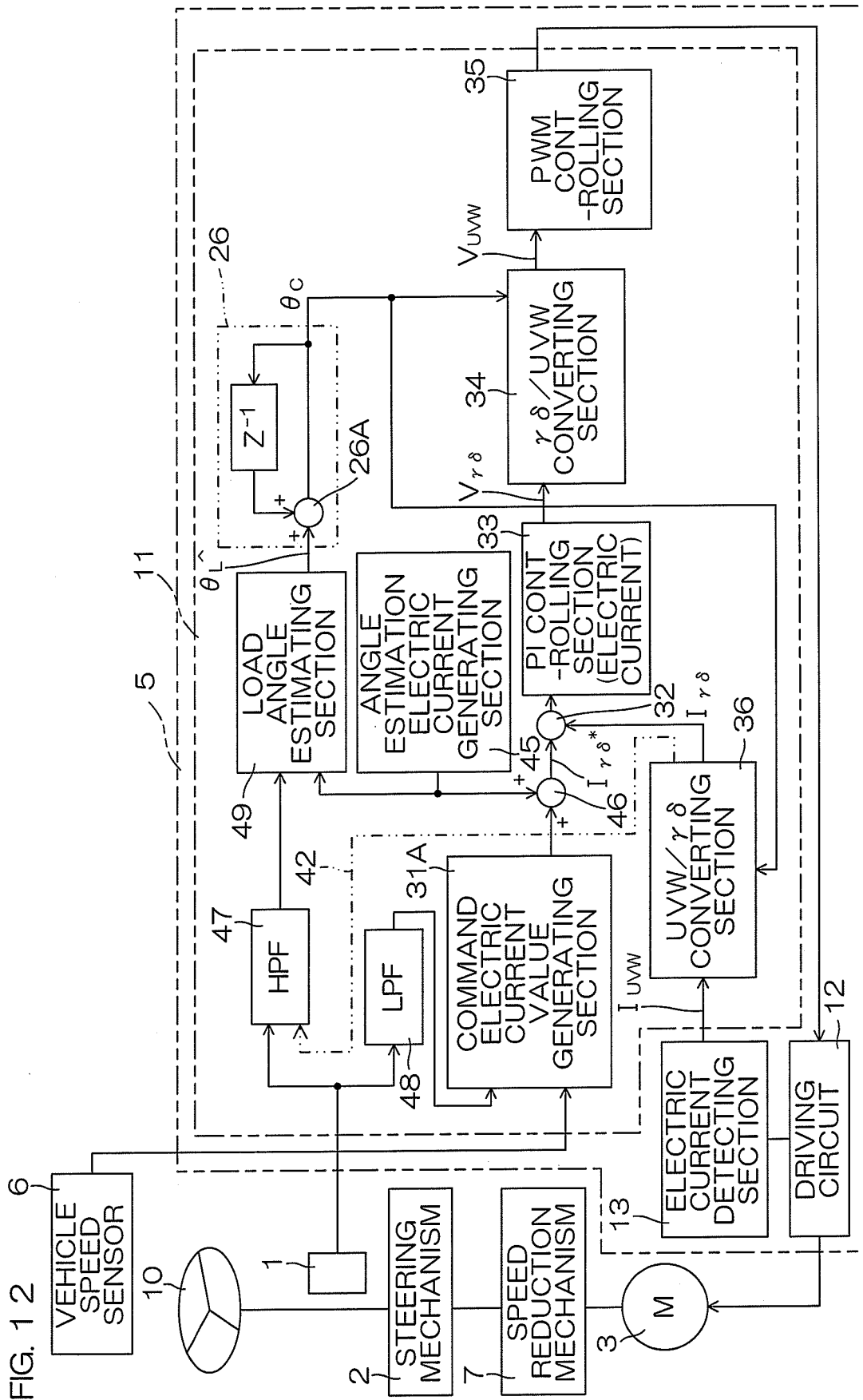
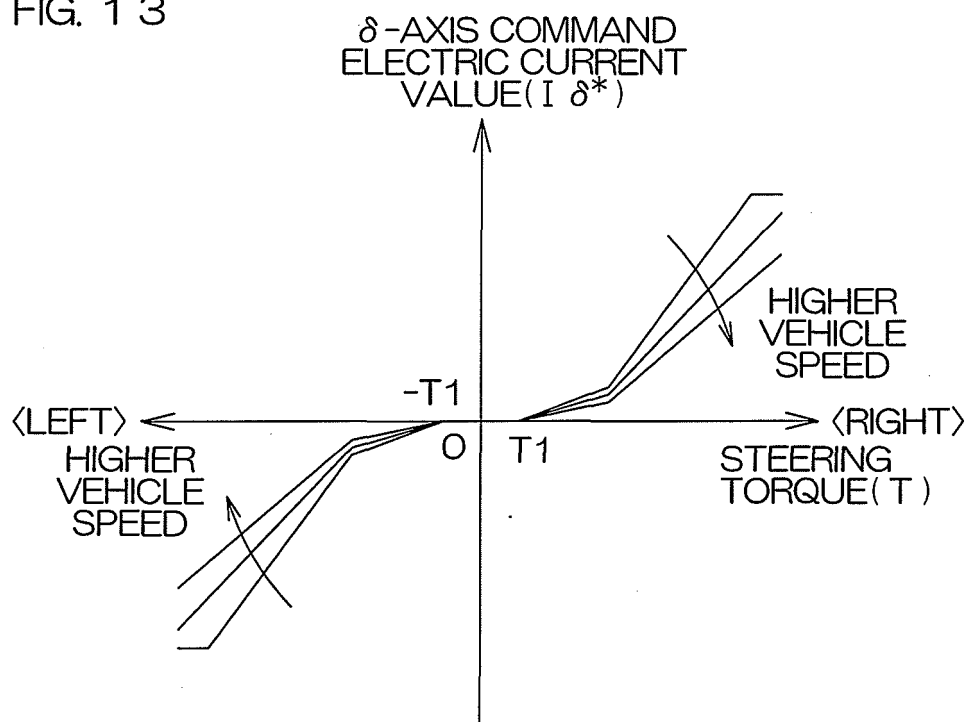


FIG. 13



REFERENCES CITED IN THE DESCRIPTION

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